“Tall Hisban”
Guide for Guides

Prepared by Oystein S. LaBianca,
Director of Hisban Excavation
and Lawrence T. Geraty,
Director, Hesbon 1974-76
With technical assistance from Erik LaBianca, Dana Langlois, Michael
Russell, Sharon Prest, Tony Zappia
In addition to the excavations at the sites shown, more than 250 ancient sites have been found by means of surface surveys inside the 5 km radius encircled study areas.
Hesban Final Publications

The fourteen volume Hesban series presents the final results of anthropological, archaeological, and historical research carried out at Tell Hesban and vicinity between 1968 and 1978. (See enclosed form to order.)

Hesban 1: Sedentarization and Nomadization.
Hesban 2: Environmental Foundations
Hesban 3: Historical Foundations
Hesban 4: Ethnoarchaeological Foundations
Hesban 5: Archaeological Survey of the Hesban Region
Hesban 6: Iron Age Strata
Hesban 7: Hellenistic and Roman Strata
Hesban 8: Byzantine and Early Islamic Strata
Hesban 9: Ayyubid-Mamluk Strata
Hesban 10: The Necropolis of Tell Hesban
Hesban 11: Ceramic Finds
Hesban 12: Small Finds
Hesban 13: Faunal Remains
Hesban 14: Hesban and Biblical History

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Madaba Plains Project

Seasonal Reports

The Madaba Plains Project seasonal reports presents the findings of investigations of Tell el-‘Umeiri, Tell Jalul, and surrounding regions following each major field season. (See enclosed form to order.)

Madaba Plains Project 1: The 1984 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity
Madaba Plains Project 2: The 1987 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity
Madaba Plains Project 3: The 1989 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity
Madaba Plains Project 4: The 1992 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity
Madaba Plains Project 5: The 1994 Season at Tell el-‘Umeiri and Vicinity

Andersom University Press, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 49104-1700
Phone: (616) 471-3392, Fax: (616) 471-6224, E-mail: aupress@andrews.edu
Gopher: North America/USA/Michigan/Andrews University/AU Press
Role of Pottery

- Pottery a feature of human life since Neolithic times
- Pottery is ubiquitous, regardless of culture or class
- Pottery can be a useful indicator of chronology based on its form, ware and decoration
- When a pot is broken, it produces potsherds which are discarded and for the most part, useless except to archaeologists
- Pottery can be indicative of the food system in use, lifestyle, trade, and standard of living
- Whole forms are found usually in cemeteries while tall sites produce mostly potsherds
- Some potsherds were used in pottery production (as grit), as scrapers, or for ostraca
Concept of Stratigraphy

- Just as the earth is composed of multiple layers of rock, so a tall site is composed of successive layers of human settlement and occupation debris.

- Human occupation and use of a site produced remains that were often covered by subsequent occupation and use of the same site.

- Archaeologists work by starting to dig from the top of this sequence of layers, separating out each layer from the layer below - therefore archaeologists work from the most recent (modern) occupation of a site back to the earliest in time, usually founded on geological bedrock.

- This method of excavation is called stratigraphic because it is based on separation of the strata or layers.

- Archaeologists date the contents of each stratum or layer by its latest finds (in terms of time).
Prehistoric Hisban

- The most likely location of prehistoric activity at Tall Hisban is in and around its caves.

- Evidence of flintknapping, or manufacture of stone tools, has been found in the Hardy People Cave. Three hammer tools and several cores have been found, along with debitage (or scraps) from flintknapping.

- Also, numerous fragments such as Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) scrapers, hand axes, and Neolithic (New Stone Age) arrowheads have been found at the site.

- A total of 57 prehistoric sites have been located in the region within 5 km radius of Tall Hisban. From these sites, over 1729 stone tool fragments have been identified.
Madaba Plain Project
Hesban Survey: Preliminary report
By:
Ghassas Jeries Sayeij; BZU

This report includes the preliminary analysis and classification of the lithic artifacts that have been collected from the survey. The final analysis however, will be done, hopefully, before the end of this year.

The following table presents the analyzed artifacts of the survey as well as the number of sites, which have been visited and recorded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of sites</th>
<th>No. of tools</th>
<th>No. of debitage</th>
<th>Total no. of artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>1729</td>
<td>2327</td>
<td>4053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these 57 sites where lithic were found, the survey team was not able to visit 8 other sites because of the rejection of the landowners, while the rest of the sites that have been surveyed (19 sites) do not have lithic (all together are 84 sites).

The following table shows the prehistoric sites as well as the possible economy in Hesban region, based on lithic analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site no.</th>
<th>No of artifacts</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Possible dating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS003</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>Farming + slaughtering</td>
<td>Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS005</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Slaughtering</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS010</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>Slaughtering + farming + quarry.</td>
<td>Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS018</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Farming + hunting.</td>
<td>Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS021</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>Farming + hunting.</td>
<td>Neolithic / Early Bronze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS028</td>
<td>090</td>
<td>Farming.</td>
<td>Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS045</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>Farming + hunting + slaughtering</td>
<td>Early Bronze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS061</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>Farming.</td>
<td>Neolithic + an obsidian tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS070</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>Slaughtering + farming + quarry.</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS071</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>Slaughtering + farming + quarry.</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS104</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>Hunting + farming + quarry + slaughtering</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / E Bronze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS226</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>Hunting + farming + slaughtering</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS229</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>Farming + slaughtering</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS235</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>Farming + slaughtering</td>
<td>Epi-Paleolithic / Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS245</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>Farming + slaughtering + hunting</td>
<td>Neolithic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Site’s economy was determined based on the probable function of the tools, while the possible dating of these sites has been selected based on the typological features of these tools.

This is in short the result of the preliminary analysis and classification of the lithic artifacts of Hesban survey.
Bronze Age Hisban

- Excavators have to date only found a few potsherds dating to the Bronze Age at Tall Hisban
- Early Bronze Age tombs are found in numerous locations within 1 km of the site
- Inside the Hardy People Cave, two shafts can be seen which may originally have been used as tombs during Early Bronze
Here is the entrance to the cave of the Hardy People.
Early Iron I Dry Moat

- Dated ca. 1250-1200 B.C.

- Designed to protect the weakest point on the tall

- A similar moat can be seen at Tall el-Umayri

- The moat was combined with a retaining wall and rampart on its upper side; the combination provided an effective defense system

- The dry moat was cut off by the construction of the later Iron Age reservoir whose builders blocked the moat with huge stones
The dry moat was designed to protect the residents of the palace.
Iron II Reservoir

- Dated possibly as early as the tenth century B.C.
- Its dimensions were 17.5 m on a side and 7 m deep
- Capacity was 2,200,00 L
- Mesha, King of Moab mentions the importance of such installations in this region during the Iron Age
- This installation may be referenced in the Bible (Song of Songs 7:4) "Your eyes are like the pools at Heshbon."
Hellenistic Acropolis

- In the Late Hellenistic Period, between ca. 198-63 B.C., the inhabitants of Hesban reconfigured the summit of the site as an acropolis by building a square perimeter wall

- These builders may have been Hasmonean herders and farmers, certainly people who accepted as part of their daily existence the hardship involved in life on the military-political frontier

- The walled structure on the Acropolis may have been a fort; nearly a fifth of all objects found were military in nature
Hellenistic Period  ca 198-63 BC
Roman Stairway and Plaza

- In the Early Roman Period, after the Iron Age Reservoir had gone out of use and was filled, the flat terrace it created to the south of the acropolis was used a plaza or market.

- The acropolis area was connected to the plaza by a monumental stairway complete with balustrade on its eastern end.

- Successive “plaster” layers build up in this area between 63 B.C. and A.D. 135 and even later, as the plaza was resurfaced numerous times - each resurfacing covering up part of the lower portion of the stairway.

- On this stairway was found a bone carving of Prometheus.
Late Roman Temple

- A coin minted at “Esbous” during the reign of Elagabulus (A.D. 218-222) was found at Hesban.

- On the coin’s reverse was found a city goddess standing before a four-columned temple facade.

- The foundation for such a four-columned temple facade was excavated on the acropolis between the later Islamic bath house and the entrance to the Byzantine church.

- The fine ashlar masonry of this Late Roman temple was also exposed along its northern side.

- Most of the temple is covered by later, unexcavated, Mamluk remains, though the columned processional way leading up to the temple from the east was re-used for the Byzantine basilica.
"Esbus" coin showing "Temple"
Byzantine Church

- In Stratum 9 (A.D. 408-527) a Christian basilica with an inscribed apse was constructed in the place of the previous Roman Temple

- The nave was 7 m wide

- Extensive reuse of Roman architecture characterized the Byzantine church

- A room was found on each side of the apse, the diaconicon (for offerings, records, vestiments) on the south side and the protheses (Eucharist preparations and storage) on the north side

- Remnants of the mosaic floors were found throughout the church

- Several associated cisterns supplied the church with water

- The church came to an end during the Sassanid invasion of A.D. 614

Plate 6.8 Byzantine mosaic Floor A.4:8 from Hesban
North Church

- Located on the lower slope on the north side
- Excavated in 1978 by John Lawton and Larry Herr
- Large Mosaic found and relics underneath the alter
- The church had three use phases:
- Upper phase dates to early 7th century showing that it survived the Islamic conquest
- One of three Byzantine churches in Hisban
Roman/Byzantine Cemeteries

- The majority of the excavated tombs are located on a southwestern spur of Hesban, some 660 m. southwest of the acropolis

- Altogether some 29 tombs were dug

- Six tombs types were identified

- Most of the tombs were family tombs for multiple burials

- Two of the family tombs were sealed with rolling stones - The only two such tombs of this type found in Jordan; these are of interest because they are similar to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea in which Jesus was buried
ROLLING STONE TOMB
Mamluk Regional Capital
ca AD 1260-1500

Mamluk Tower

- Earlier southwest tower reused and heavily reinforced now (one side 18m long)
- Envelopes and protects the palace
- Probably close to original Mamluk professional gateway

Mamluk Palace

- Dated to 14th century, same time when Sultan al-Nasis Muhammad built his palace at Kerak
- Typical Egyptian courtyard iwan palace plan:
  1. open central courtyard
  2. high-ceiling barrel-vaulted rooms around it
  3. also contains a small, private bathhouse
Hardy People Cave

- The extensive evidence of cave dwellings in Hisban attest their importance throughout the history of the site.

- This cave has produced evidence of human occupation and use since Paleolithic times down to the present.

- The cave was extensively enhanced and modified during Hellenistic and Roman times. Several arches mark the entrances to rooms which are also separated by masonry walls.

- Such use of caves attest the hardiness of the Jordanian people. They have survived through good times and bad by being flexible, resourceful, admirably self-reliant and courageous.

- Keys to their success as a hardy people include:
  1. Kin-based social organization centered in the family and tribe
  2. Ability to join together under leadership of centralized governments when needed
  3. Reliance on a diversity of crops and animals for their livelihood
  4. Willingness to live in caves and tents if necessary to maintain their livelihoods
  5. Intimate knowledge of sources of water and of rainwater collection techniques
  6. Reliance or honor as a means to assure law and order
  7. Reliance or hospitality to maintain bonds of cooperation and to "keep up on the news"
Several arches mark the entrances to rooms in the cave.
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS IN PALESTINE AND TRANSJORDAN

1. Prehistoric (ca. 10,000 BP - 1800 BC)

2. The Early Bronze Age (ca. 2000 - 1500 BC) in Egypt
   *Middle Bronze* (ca. 2000 - 1500 BC) in Egypt
   - Early Bronze II (ca. 1700 - 1500 BC)
   - Early Bronze III (ca. 1500 - 1200 BC)

3. The Iron Age (ca. 1200 - 500 BC)
   - Early Iron Age (ca. 1200 - 900 BC)
   - Middle Iron Age (ca. 900 - 700 BC)
   - Late Iron Age (ca. 700 - 500 BC)

4. The Persian Period (ca. 500 - 330 BC)
   - Early Persian (ca. 500 - 330 BC)
   - Middle Persian (ca. 330 - 224 BC)
   - Late Persian (ca. 224 - 170 BC)

5. The Hellenistic Period (ca. 330 BC - 30 BC)
   - Early Hellenistic (ca. 330 - 260 BC)
   - Middle Hellenistic (ca. 260 - 190 BC)
   - Late Hellenistic (ca. 190 - 30 BC)

6. The Roman Period (ca. 30 BC - 476 AD)
   - Early Roman (ca. 30 BC - 14 AD)
   - Middle Roman (ca. 14 - 284 AD)
   - Late Roman (ca. 284 - 476 AD)

7. The Early Christian Period (ca. 476 AD - 635 AD)

8. The Byzantine Period (ca. 635 AD - 750 AD)

9. The Umayyad Period (ca. 750 AD - 1050 AD)

10. The Abbasid Period (ca. 1050 AD - 1290 AD)

11. The Seljuk Period (ca. 1290 AD - 1600 AD)

12. The Ottoman Period (ca. 1600 AD - 1917 AD)

13. The British Mandate (1917 AD - 1948 AD)

14. The State of Israel (1948 AD - 2023 AD)

15. The Palestinian Authority (1994 AD - 2023 AD)

16. The Arab Spring (2010 AD - 2023 AD)

17. The Current Situation (2023 AD - present)

Lament (L. a., Lat.)

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Institute of Archaeology Assyriological Series


- **Hesban Final Publication Series**

- **Madaba Plains Project Series**
ANCIENT POTTERY OF TRANSJORDAN—An Introduction Utilizing Published Whole Forms: Late Neolithic Through Late Islamic. By Ralph E. Hendrix, Philip R. Drey, and J. Bjørnar Storfjell (in consultation with: Piotr Bienkowski, Joseph A. Greene, Timothy P. Harrison, Larry G. Herr, Nancy Lapp, Gloria London, Burton MacDonald, Gerald L. Mettingly, Mohammad Najjar, Friedbert Niew, Kay Prag, Paul J. Ray, Jr., R. Thomas Schaub, Robert Schick, Udo Worschech); Wirebound text manual; 356 pages; glossary; bibliography; indexed; (0-9642060-1-3); $18.95.

APOT standardizes pottery terminology and provides an introduction to the study of the typology and relative chronology of ancient Transjordanian pottery. The teaching corpus was selected from over 4000 published vessels representing 23 periods from 55 sites. Chapter 1: Researching Pottery Morphology delineates why archaeologists collect and study pottery. Chapter 2: Analyzing Ancient Pottery (11 figures, 3 tables) describes vessel parts/surface treatments introducing basic vessel morphology. Chapter 3: Standardizing Pottery Terminology (18 figures, 4 tables) standardizes vessel names, objectifies size terminology, and categorizes pottery forms. Chapter 4: Summarizing Ancient Chronology (1 table) provides a brief background for each archaeological period. Chapter 5: Characterizing Archaeological Periods (2 maps; 469 pottery examples) describes for each period how the pottery was made (technique), its aesthetic qualities (surface treatment), and provides 469 pottery examples scaled to 20% each with a full description and individual bibliography. Also included are a Glossary (320 entries), a Bibliography (228 entries), and a complete Index.


Early Christian lamps are described in detail. Over a hundred examples are illustrated in detailed line drawings, many with multiple views. The lamp inscriptions analyzed and associated with their historical context. Nitowski provides a very interesting typology which attempts to associate not only the morphology of the lamp but also the theological content of its impressed faith-statements. This book provides dynamic evidence of everyday religious belief and practice during the very first centuries of the Christian faith.

Archaeological Notebook. Compiled by David Merling. No ISBN; 8.5 × 11 inches; paper; $7.50.

This spiral-bound field notebook is designed for use by area and square supervisors to record top plans, sections, and notes. Each two-page spread includes a cm-ruled graph paper on the left page and notebook ruled paper on the right page. The graph paper is printed in non-reproducing ink to facilitate publication. Included in the frontis pages is a brief glossary of archaeological terms, a table of archaeological periodization, and a sample top plan with archaeological symbols.

Reprints In Stock

Geological Study of the Heshbon Area. R. Bullard. paper $0.50
True or False? Genuine and False Cylinder Seals at Andrews University. E. Porada. paper $1.00
Heshbon in the Bible and Archaeology. S.H. Horn. 1982. (26 pp) paper $2.00
A Symposium ...Bible, Oriental Studies, and Archaeology. Perkins, et al. paper $2.00
The Tall Hisban Expedition was organized in 1967 by Siegfried S. Horn, of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA. Excavations began in the summer of 1968. In 1974, Lawrence T. Geraty succeeded Dr. Horn. From 1968-1976, the five campaigns set new standards in field of archaeology. Recent restoration of the site began in 1996. Continued excavations are headed by Øystein S. LaBlanca, from Andrews University.
Tall Hisban: An open-air Classroom

- At the base of Tall Hisban, near the parking lot, an archaeology education area has been set aside. It is a pilot project established by the excavators in cooperation with the Hisban schools, the Friends of Archaeology, and the Department of Antiquities. This classroom will allow visitors to experience archaeology firsthand.

- The advantages of Tall Hisban as an education area include the following:

  1. The site is easily accessible to the schools in Jordan’s major population areas.
  2. The ruins at Tall Hisban are representative of most of Jordan’s major cultural periods.
  3. The site’s history is very well known thanks to over 30 years of research.
  4. The site is owned by the Department of Antiquities.
  5. The excavators are committed to education as a key to enhancing local cooperation to protect archaeological sites.